

Wycombe Wanderers 1, Chelsea XI 1

A TRAGIC own goal by Ian Rundle robbed Wycombe Wanderers of a fully deserved victory in their friendly against a Chelsea XI on Tuesday night. Until that moment the Blues had been in almost total command, producing vintage football, and certainly some of their best this season.

Wycombe treated this game like an F.A. Cup tie, fighting tooth and nail all the way. It was only their age-old trouble of poor finishing and some terrible luck at times, that took away their success.

Chelsea coach Dario Gradi, the former Sutton United player, brought down a strong side to face the Blues. Four players — Steve Sherwood, Marvin Hinton, Johnny Boyle

and Ian Britton — had played for the senior team this season.

Goalkeeper Sherwood had plenty of opportunities to demonstrate his talents while the other players to catch the eye were winger Alan Taylor, and number eight Gary Stanley. Taylor looked a class player in the Steve Heighway mould but as the game progressed he found it increasingly difficult to get past Wycombe veteran Derek Gamblin, who came out of the duel well on top.

SPLIT OPEN

But although Chelsea had the individuals, Wycombe were the better team. The main features of their game were the intelligent running and superb passing which often split open the Chelsea rearguard, Hinton and all.

Every man gave 100 per cent effort with Larry Pritchard, Tony Horseman and Alan Gane outstanding. Pritchard and Horseman all but scored while Alan Gane just couldn't put a foot wrong and, like Horseman, played his finest game this season.

In front of a large crowd, many of which were ecstatic schoolboys, Wycombe powered into attack with Pritchard sending in a low drive and then Sherwood palming Amos's corner onto his own post.

Wanderers continued to pepper the visitors' goal but their efforts were from long range and Sherwood dealt competently. Early on, Chelsea's main threat came from Taylor, who put in one glorious run, right along the wing from deep inside his own half to the Wycombe by-line.

Goalkeeper John Maskell produced one glorious save in the 26th minute after Taylor beat two men and centred for Stanley whose powerful header was tipped away in great style.

Wycombe hit back and went into a deserved lead after 35 minutes. A cross from the left was partially blocked and Brian Langfield was on hand at the near post to slide the ball into the net, for his third goal in three matches. Before half time Tony Amos missed a great chance to put Wycombe two up but with only Sherwood to beat, he lifted the ball high over the bar.

In the second period Horseman, Gane and Pritchard really began to come into their own. Horseman was at his most dangerous, firing in shots from every conceivable angle.

He all but made it 2-0 when his effort from close in rolled agonisingly past the post.

But in the 77th minute Chelsea equalised with a fortunate goal. Mike Sorensen made all the running for the score, overlapping from full back and beating two men on the flank. He sent in a low cross and Ian Rundle, in attempting to clear, could only deflect the ball past Maskell.

Unperturbed, Wycombe strode forward again and with five minutes remaining, they almost scored the killer goal. Paul Birdseye lofted the ball over a square defence to the unmarked Horseman, about four yards out. "Bodger" had the goal at his mercy but his side-foot shot was too weak and the ball struck the boot of Sherwood for a corner. Few would have denied Wanderers another goal — including Chelsea.

WYCOMBE: J. Maskell, D. Gamblin, I. Rundle, R. Williams, D. Bullock, A. Gane, L. Pritchard, P. Birdseye, B. Langfield, A. Horseman, A. Amos. Sub. M. Holifield (not used).

CHelsea: S. Sherwood, M. Sorensen, L. Lawrence, M. Hinton, P. Sees, I. Britton, J. Boyle, G. Stanley, C. Walker, T. Ord (sub. N. Roberts 45 mins), A. Taylor.

Referee: D. Noble (High Wycombe).

Half time: 1-0. Goalscorers: Langfield (35), Rundle (o.g. 77).

Attendance: 1,216.